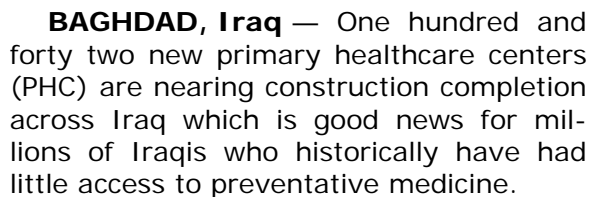


By Erich Langer
Gulf Region Division

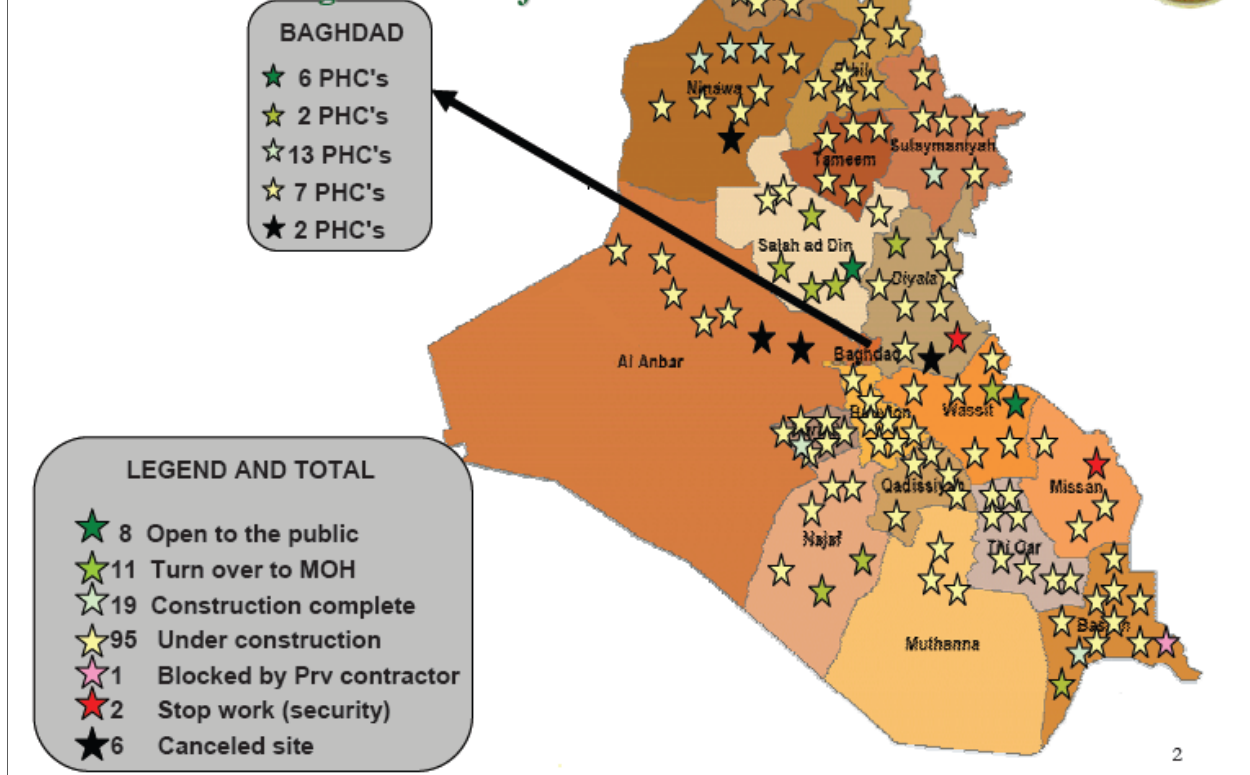


Roundtable: Focus on Health press conference June 30.

The GRD Reconstruction Roundtables are a biweekly media engagements that feature subject matter experts from the Government of Iraq, U.S. Embassy, GRD and other government and non government entities responsible for helping rebuild Iraq's antiquated infrastructure. Rep-

Primary Healthcare Clinics (PHCs)

Status of PHC Program as of 19 Jun 07



2

representatives gather to highlight infrastructure construction accomplishments in areas as far-ranging as education, electricity, oil and security.

"Some of the completed PHCs are seeing 350 or more patients per day," said GRD Facilities Sector Director Col. Paul Babin and leader behind GRD's health construction program that also is rehabilitating 20 hospitals and building a new state-of-the-art pediatric oncology hospital.

"The PHCs are being built in muhalas or neighborhoods across Iraq near the people they will serve," Babin said. "Originally designed to see 200 patients per day, some PHCs are treating twice as many people."

The centers come in three varieties:

- Type A clinics include physician and administrative offices, examination rooms, pharmacy, laboratory and café.

- Type B clinics include the same amenities but do double duty as teaching facilities. They also have two classrooms, a medical library and additional storage.

- Type C facilities are the largest model which adding emergency room and labor delivery facilities. They also have a nursery, conference room, teaching facilities and residential apartments for four doctors.

"Each PHC is equipped with modern medical and office equipment, furnishings and consumables," said Babin. "Pharmacies, dental offices and even X-ray diagnostic equipment are standard fare at Iraq's PHCs. Following construction, clinics are turned over to MOH for staffing by Iraqi doctors and medical staff and begin seeing patients."

GRD and MoH officials anticipated a large demand for PHC medical care estimating 35,000 patients annually to visit

each location. So far, PHC visitation has exceeded all estimates. If the trend continues at levels reported nearly 10 million Iraqis may annually benefit from PHC medical services, Babin said.

Most of Iraq's hospitals are structures that date back several decades. New construction and rehabilitation of existing public health facilities was largely ignored during the previous regime. In fact, the nation's newest hospital was constructed in the mid-1980s.

"Today, the MoH has a plan and they are beginning to execute their \$500 million budget," said Deputy Health Attaché Lt. Cdr. Anthony Marci, U.S. Department of State. "The MoH is moving proactively to manage their 39 hospitals and clinics, have increased doctor salaries by 100 percent and are busy preparing to fully staff all PHCs."

Marci began as the deputy health attaché in May and has experience in managing hospitals and medical programs. Most recently, he was responsible for U.S. hospital management in the United Kingdom.

Marci's early impressions of the MoH have been positive.

"Since arriving here, I witnessed the MoH undertake a huge public health vaccination program," said Marci referring to the Ministry's recent efforts that resulted in the administration of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations to over 3.5 million Iraqis.

U.S. and MoH officials say it will take hard work to rehabilitate Iraq's public health facilities since many of the structures are in need of everything from new roofs to mechanical and electrical renovations.

Hospital renovations spearheaded by

GRD have been underway since 2004. To date, 13 hospitals have been rehabilitated with seven more currently in various phases of construction.

"Our principle focus is to renovate Iraq's maternity, pediatric and children's hospitals. We do most of the work in phases so each facility can continue providing essential medical services to the community," said Babin. "Construction efforts are centered on updating mechanical, electrical, sanitary, life safety and communication systems."

The GRD is also equipping hospitals with new equipment such as beds, incubators, radiography and laboratory equipment are being replaced with U.S. funded equipment.

Perhaps the prime jewel in GRD's health construction program is the Basrah Children's Hospital (BCH). Scheduled for completion in 2008, the new 94-bed facility will be a clinical and training pediatric oncology hospital serving Iraq and her neighbors, according to Babin.

"Construction on BCH is about 52 percent complete and demonstrates a true model of partnership," said Babin. "In addition to U.S. government funding, the Spanish government, Project HOPE, the United Nations and MoH are all working together. It's much more involved than constructing a building. We're integrating critical equipment, consumables, major medical equipment and training all into one extremely important project."

Capacity development is a key component as well. Future BCH administrators, facility engineers and biomedical engineers will receive job specific training at hospitals outside Iraq as they prepare for their role in helping Iraqi children.

Editor's Note: Erich Langer is a public affairs officer working for the Gulf Region Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in Iraq. For more information, contact the public affairs office at 540-665-1233, by email at cegrd.pao@tac01.usace.army.mil, or visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.